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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8878  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 0054  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1627

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 001098

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS, PRM AND DRL. GENEVA FOR RMA.

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/23/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: ICRC'S ROLE IN BURMA, SOUTHERN THAILAND, CAMBODIA

Classified By: Political Officer Janet Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (U) On August 23, incoming and outgoing heads of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Delegation Bangkok paid a courtesy call on the Charge. The Delegation's new Head, Christian Brunner, said that he has already met with Embassy Bangkok officers, and that the ICRC Head of Operations for Southeast Asia and Pacific Edith Baeriswyl recently visited the region.

[¶2.](#) (C) Outgoing Head of Regional Delegation Fred Grimm said that during Baeriswyl's visit, Baeriswyl went to Burma seeking a resolution to discussions over ICRC's presence in the country but left without tangible results. Stating that ICRC headquarters in Geneva will make the ultimate decision, Brunner believes the organization will probably reduce its representation in Burma to one Head of Mission staff in Rangoon to maintain contacts there and to continue an orthopedic project. They agreed with the observation that the decrease in staff and activities is a blow to Burma.

[¶3.](#) (C) ICRC coverage of Burma issues will likely shift to a new sub-regional office to open in Mae Sot, Thailand, with an ICRC plan to increase its presence along the Thai side of the Burma-Thailand border. Brunner said the Chiang Mai office will then become a sub-office to Mae Sot. The Mae Sot office will be expected to keep contact with Karen and Shan coming into Thailand, partly through a war wounded program for those who come for treatment in Thai hospitals, to continue ICRC's work on IHL promotion.

[¶4.](#) (C) Grimm said he laid the groundwork for ICRC's current activities in southern Thailand in a meeting with General Winai Phattiyakul, then Secretary General of the Thailand National Security Council, who recognized ICRC's role "in situations like this." The ICRC representatives said they have a sub-delegation in all but name in southern Thailand where three expatriate and two Thai staff are posted. They said the staff have had no direct contact with opposition groups but believe ICRC interlocutors may be passing messages along and that all forces have an understanding of ICRC's neutral and humanitarian role.

[¶5.](#) (U) ICRC gave a generally positive report on its orthopedic program in Cambodia and on its ability to access prisons in the country. Grimm stated that ICRC met with former Police Chief Heng Pov once since his detention by Cambodian authorities. ICRC has also had access to former Khmer Rouge prison director Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, who is now held at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) detention center in Phnom Penh. The ECCC detention center meets minimal international

standards, Grimm said. The ICRC visitors talked about the generally bad conditions in Cambodia's prisons, mentioning the lack of clean water and sanitation.

16. (U) Incoming Head Brunner previously served in Thailand as ICRC Deputy Head of Delegation from 1997 to 2001. He most recently served as Head of Delegation Serbia (2005-2007) and Sierra Leone (2002-2003). Brunner started with the ICRC in 1984 as a Delegate in Iran and this is his thirteenth ICRC appointment overseas. He arrived in Thailand as Head of Regional Delegation Bangkok on August 20.

CAMPBELL